Similarity, uncertainty, and dismissiveness

Tue Trinh

Leibniz-Zentrum
Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft

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IEC-Reduplication

- Vietnamese has a productive reduplication strategy where the reduplicant appears to the right of the base and is segmentally identical to the base except that its last rhyme is 'iếc' [ɪək]

sách 'book'	→	sách xiếc
sɛk		sɛk.sɪək
cam 'orange'	→	cam kiếc
kam		kam.kɪək
sinh viên 'student'	→	sinh viên sinh viếc
sɪŋ.vɪən		sɪŋ.vɪən.sɪŋ.vɪək
ca-mê-ra 'camera'	→	ca-mê-ra ca-mê-riếc
ka.me.ra		ka.me.ra ka.me.rɪək

Semantic effect

- This type of reduplication suggests uncertainty on the part of the speaker

(1) A: Nam đang ăn gì đấy?
         Nam is eating what

(2) B: Nó đang ăn cam.
         He is eating orange
     C: Không đúng.   Nó đang ăn quýt.
         That's not true. He is eating tangerine.

(3) B: Nó đang ăn cam+kiếc   gì đó
         He is eating orange+RED DEM$_{wh}$
     C: #Không đúng.   Nó đang ăn quýt.
         That's not true. He is eating tangerine.

$\rightarrow$ I will not discuss DEM$_{wh}$

The morpheme

- We assume there is a reduplication morpheme RED

  (4) Phonetic consequence
      a. cam+RED → cam kiếc
      b. sinh viên+RED → sinh viên sinh viếc

  (5) Semantic consequence
      Nam is eating orange+RED
      ⤳ the speaker is not certain that Nam is eating an orange
      ⤳ $\neg K_S$ Nam is eating an orange

How is RED phonologically realized?

Morphophonemic rule

- Let $[_w \_\_X]$ be a word whose last rhyme is X

$$[_w \_\_X]+\mathrm{RED} \rightarrow \underbrace{[_w \_\_X]}_{base}+\underbrace{[_w \_\_ \textipa{I@k}]}_{reduplicant}$$

(6) a.   [kam]+RED → [kam]+[kɪək]
     b.   [sɪŋ.vɪən]+RED → [sɪŋ.vɪən]+[sɪŋ.vɪək]

cf. Vu (1998), Pham and Pham (2020)

How does the "uncertainty inference" of RED come about?

Proposal (1)

- RED weakens the meaning of the base word

(7) a. $[\![\text{orange}]\!] = \{x \mid x \text{ is an orange}\}$
     b. $[\![\text{orange}+\text{RED}]\!] = \{x \mid x \text{ is similar to an orange}\}$

(8) $\underbrace{\text{John is eating an orange}}_{p} \Rightarrow \underbrace{\text{John is eating an orange}+\text{RED}}_{p \vee q \vee r...}$

cf. Armoskaite and Kutlu (2014), Smith (2020)

$\phi_{weaker} \nrightarrow \neg K_S \ \psi_{stronger}$

- Utterance of ϕ does <u>not</u> generally imply uncertainty about stronger ψ

  (9) John lives in Paris $\Rightarrow$ John lives in France
     A: Where does John live?
     B: He lives in France.
         $\nrightarrow \neg K_S$ John lives in Paris

  (10) x is a male student $\Rightarrow$ x is a student
     A: Who did John talk to?
     B: He talked to a student.
         $\nrightarrow \neg K_S$ John talked to a male student

$\phi_{weaker} \leadsto \neg K_S \; \psi_{stronger+relevant}$

- Utterance of ϕ implies uncertainty about ψ if ψ is <u>stronger</u> than ϕ and ψ is <u>relevant</u>

  (11) A: Does John live in Paris?
        B: He lives in France$_{\text{He lives in Paris}}$
            $\leadsto \neg K_S$ John lives in Paris

  (12) A: Did John talk to a male student?
        B: He talked to a student$_{\text{He talked to a male student}}$
            $\leadsto \neg K_S$ John talked to a male student

cf. Grice (1967)

Proposal (2)

- N+RED makes N relevant

  (13) A: What is John eating?
        B: He is eating an orange-RED_{He is eating an orange}
            $\rightsquigarrow \neg K_S$ John is eating an orange

cf. the literature on NPIs (Linebarger 1980, Kadmon and Landman 1993, Krifka 1995, Crnič 2019)

But...

- Utterance of ϕ can license the inference $K_S \neg \psi$ when ψ is a stronger relevant alternative

  (14) A: Does John live in Paris?
       B: He lives in France
          Possible inference: John lives in France but not in Paris

- This is not possible with RED

  (15) A: Is Nam eating an orange?
       B: He is eating an orange-RED
          Not a possible inference: Nam is eating something similar to an orange but not an orange

Ignorance

- The inference that RED licenses is not uncertainty but something stronger: ignorance

  (16) Nam is eating an orange
        Inference: $\neg K_S$ Nam is eating an orange $\land \neg K_S \neg$ Nam is eating an orange

Disjunction and ignorance

- Disjunctions license ignorance inferences

  (17) A: Does John live in Paris?
       B: He lives in France.
          Possible inference: $K_S \neg$ John lives in Paris

  (18) A: Does John lives in Paris?
       B: He lives in Paris or Nice or Toulouse or Lyon or Marseille ...
          Not a possible inference: $K_S \neg$ John lives in Paris

- The difference between a vague term and a disjunction of specific terms is that the disjunction necessarily makes all alternatives relevant

cf. Sauerland (2004), Chemla (2008)

Proposal (3)

- N+RED makes N relevant and at least one other alternative relevant

  (19) A: What is John eating?

  B: He is eating an orange-RED

  $\not\approx$ 'he is eating something similar to an orange'

  $\approx$ 'he is eating an orange or a tangerine or a grapefruit ...'

Observation

- When there is no ingorance inference, RED suggests dismissiveness on the part of the speaker

  (20) A: Nam làm gì?
            Nam do what
        B: Giáo sư+giáo xiếc gì đó
            professor+RED DEM$_{wh}$
            ↝ the speaker does not think highly of professors

How does dismissiveness come about and why is it in complementary
distribution with ignorance?

(21) Gricean Fact
Utterance of ϕ implies the speaker's ignorance of ψ and χ if ψ and χ are stronger and relevant and symmetric

(22) Consequence
Utterance of ϕ implies irrelevance ψ and χ if ψ and χ are stronger and the speaker are not ignorant about ψ and χ

Fox (2007), Buccola and Haida (2020)

Relevance + non-ignorance = dismissiveness

(23) A: What does Nam do?
   B: He is a professor-RED
      ≈ He is a professor or a lecturer or a researcher ...
      ≈ these jobs are not important enough to be of relevance to me

Incompatibility with classifiers

- N-RED cannot combine with the classifier for N

  (24) a. Nam đang mua sách- xiếc gì đó
           Nam is buying book- RED DEM$_{wh}$
       b. #Nam đang mua hai quyển sách- xiếc gì đó
           Nam is buying two CL   book- RED DEM$_{wh}$
       c. Nam đang mua hai quyển sách gì đó
           Nam is buying two CL   book DEM$_{wh}$

Semantics of CL

- Nouns in classifier languages are "number neutral"
- CL maps P to the set of P atoms

(25)   a. $[\![\text{sách}]\!] = \{x \mid x \text{ is a singular book or a plurality of books}\}$
             $= \{a, b, c, ... a+b, a+c, b+c, a+b+c, ...\}$
      b. $[\![\text{quyển sách}]\!] = \{x \mid x \text{ is a singular book}\}$
             $= \{a, b, c, ...\}$

Selectional requirement of CL

- CL imposes requirements on the semantics of the noun it combines with

  (26) $[\![\text{quyển}]\!] = [\lambda P : P = book\ [\lambda x.\ x \text{ is a singular } P]]$

- Weakening P causes presupposition failure

  (27)#quyển sách+xiếc
       CL   book+RED
       because: book+RED $\neq$ book

More on CL

- But we know that **quyển** can combine with things similar to books

  (28) quyển + $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{sách 'book'} \\ \text{sổ 'notebook'} \\ \text{lịch 'calendar'} \\ \text{...} \end{array} \right.$

- This means we should revise our semantics for CL

  (29) $[\![\text{quyển}]\!] \neq [\lambda P : P = book \; [\lambda x.\; x \text{ is a singular } P]]$
  $= [\lambda P : P = sim(book) \; [\lambda x.\; x \text{ is a singular } P]]$

Contextual dimension of RED

- Again: why is RED incompatible with CL?

(30) $\underbrace{[\lambda P : P = sim(book) \; [\lambda x. \; ... \;]]}_{\text{quyển}} + \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \checkmark \text{ sách 'book'} \\ \checkmark \text{ lịch 'calendar'} \\ ... \\ \textsf{X} \text{ sách-xiếc 'book-RED'} \end{array} \right.$

- CL requires grammatical while RED guarantees pragmatic similarity

(31) a. $\llbracket \text{quyển} \rrbracket = [\lambda P : P = sim_g(book) \; [\lambda x. \; x \text{ is a singular } P]]$
   $sim_g(book) = $ books and things considered similar to books
   by the grammar

   b. $\llbracket \text{book-RED} \rrbracket = sim_c(book)$
   $sim_c(book) = $ books and things considered similar to books
   in the context

cf. Denic (2023)

$sim_g \neq sim_c$

- Two different nouns describing the same object may differ with respect to their ability to combine with QUYỂN

  (32) a. Nam đang đọc một tờ/quyển tạp chí chuyên môn
            Nam is reading a   CL   journal professional
       b. #Nam đang đọc một tờ/#quyển báo   chuyên môn
            Nam is reading a   CL   journal professional

  (33) A: Nam đang đọc sách-xiếc gì đó
            Nam is reading book-RED DEM$_{wh}$
       B #Không đúng.   Nó đang đọc báo/tạp chí.
            That's not true. He is reading a journal

  (34) a. tạp chí $\subseteq$ sim_g(book), báo $\not\subseteq$ sim_g(book)
       b. báo, tạp chí $\subseteq$ sim_c(book)

Conclusion

- I have proposed an account for the intricate interpretation of IEC-reduplication using familiar ingredients of semantic analysis
    - RED introduces alternatives that are, by default, relevant
    - interpretation of an expression depends on what it means and what could have been said but was not said
    - grammar has access to the notion of "similarity"

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